

CITY OF NEWPORT NEWS HISPANIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE CITY MANAGER 2009 ANNUAL REPORT



Building positive relationships and supporting open communication between local government and the community.





2010

HISPANIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE CITY MANAGER

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2010 Ex-Officio Member
2009 Committee Member
Dr. Jesus Lizarzaburu

MAYRA CREED CHAIRPERSON

Last year was a busy year for the Hispanic Advisory Committee and it was a great pleasure to have the opportunity to serve as chair and work with many dedicated community members and city staff. The first priority for the Committee last year was to establish a set of key strategies that would assist in developing positive relationships between city government and the city's non-English speaking residents.

We saw many significant accomplishments in our efforts to assist the city in connecting with our Hispanic community. In an effort to provide information to residents on the various services and programs that are available to them, we held several listening forums at various locations throughout the city. These forums gave our residents the opportunity to hear first-hand, in Spanish, about city services, as well as provided an opportunity to ask questions.

As one of several informational tools developed, the Committee created a Spanish Citizen's Guide to Services. This document allows residents with limited English proficiency to obtain information on the various services and programs that the city and related agencies offer to residents of Newport News. The Committee also partnered with several city departments to sponsor special events and used these events as forums to provide information to the community. Also, to better educate and inform city employees and community agency representatives, we provided several in-service trainings, which included, but was not limited to, Title VI training and cultural diversity training.

We have made significant strides in fostering a positive relationship between city government and the community, however, there still remains much to be done. During the upcoming year a major focus will be completing the assessment of city departments and related agencies so that we can assist the city in improving service and program delivery to all of our Newport News residents. I am looking forward to continue to work with the city and the opportunities and challenges that come our way in 2010.

VISION

To be seen as a viable catalyst for the Newport News Hispanic Community by providing focus, leadership, and advocacy that will foster the development and enrichment of our Newport News Hispanic Community.

MISSION

To function as a liaison between city administration and the Hispanic community and to advise and make recommendations to the City Manager on current and future issues, needs, programs and services as they relate to the Hispanic community, and to ultimately improve the quality of life for all residents of the city.

KEY STRATEGIES

- ◆ Facilitate communication with city agencies and the Hispanic community;
- ◆ Resolve barriers to city programs;
- ◆ Expand outreach efforts;
- ◆ Counsel city agencies on community obstacles;
- ◆ Evaluate city programs; and
- ◆ Liaise access to city agencies, programs and services.

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE

FROM THE BEGINNING...

Over the years the Hispanic community in Newport News, and across the United States, has grown. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's 2006-2008 American Community Survey, Hispanics accounted for 5.1% of Newport News' total population, up from 4.2% in the 2000 Census. This number is continually increasing and is expected to show an increase in the upcoming 2010 Census.

In 2003, beat officers from District 24 in the city's Central Precinct noticed that members from the Hispanic community were being victimized and were not reporting crimes committed against them. The realization that citizens in our community were being victimized, and not reporting these incidents to police, led to the creation of the Hispanic Victimization Project. This project sought to increase trust and foster a positive relationship between police department personnel and the city's Hispanic residents.

In order to increase trust, the Police Department identified areas in the city where there were large concentrations of Hispanic community members residing. They conducted outreach efforts at these locations and spoke to residents about how to be safe; how to avoid becoming a victim; and to provide explanations of city laws and ordinances. Police officers also began teaching seminars at local churches in an effort to educate residents on what to do when stopped by police and how the Newport News Police Department operates and investigates crimes.

It was because of these police-driven efforts that crime drastically dropped in these areas. This drop in crime illustrated the positive relationship that was developing between the police and Hispanic residents in Newport News. Since 2003, the Police Department has continued to reach out and educate community members on these important issues in order to maintain open communication and retain the positive relationship that they have worked hard to develop.

In 2007, the Newport News Police Department hosted the first Hispanic Community Leaders meeting at the Police Department headquarters. This created a forum for members from the Police Department, city personnel and leaders from the Hispanic community to discuss ways to build trust between the community and the police. During this same time, the city's Communication Staff was in the process of developing a city-wide Strategic Communications Plan in an effort to increase communication with citizens, visitors, businesses and employees of Newport News. During this process, city management discussed the need to develop key strategies that would specifically target ways to improve communications with members of the city's growing Hispanic community. In order to increase communication with the city's non-English speaking populations, the Communications Staff recommended establishing a Hispanic Advisory Committee to the City Manager and included this in the city's Strategic Communications Plan, which was supported by City Council in December 2007.

As a result of the Police Department's efforts and the discussions held amongst city management, the Hispanic Advisory Committee to the City Manager was formally established. While the previous police-driven effort was focused on public safety, the newly established Hispanic Advisory Committee broadened its reach to include public safety, health, human services, libraries, and education. It has evolved from a public safety initiative to a city-wide effort to establish trust, open communication, and build a positive relationship between local government and the entire Newport News community.

PRESENT...

The Committee consists of community members who are actively involved with the Hispanic community in Newport News whose occupational fields vary widely including medical, real estate,

non-profit, health, and faith-based. Their expertise and direct involvement in the community provide an in-depth view of the wide-ranging issues that affect our limited English speaking community.

Also, a Working Group was established to assist the Committee in its work. The Working Group consists of city staff representing several departments including Human Services, Health, Schools, Parks & Recreation, Sheriff's Office, Police and Codes Compliance.

During 2008, much of the Committee's focus was on learning about the various city services and programs available to residents of Newport News. Presentations were made by departments and agencies that the Committee identified as having the most impact on the Hispanic community. This included the Sheriff's Office, Newport News-Hampton Community Services Board, Department of Human Services, Newport News Public Schools, Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Health Department, Healthy Families, YWCA, Project CARE, Census Bureau, and Newport News Emergency Management. These presentations gave the Committee an opportunity to brainstorm and make recommendations to the City Manager on ways to alleviate barriers that limit access to needed services and programs, not just for non-English speaking clients, but for everyone.

In 2009, the Committee developed a Strategic Plan that outlined several goals including conducting a public listening forum, developing several informational tools, partnering with various community groups, facilitating training for city staff, formulating a volunteer/internship program and liaising with the Department of Human Services.

FUTURE...

The Committee continues to work and is in the process of revising its Strategic Action Plan for 2010. The Committee will:

- ◆ Complete the city department and related agencies needs assessment;
- ◆ Conduct Public Information Forums;
- ◆ Continue to work with community agencies to deliver information to Spanish-speaking residents; and
- ◆ Continue to partner with city departments on special events and programs and provide training opportunities to city departments and related agencies.

2009 ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The Committee has been busy working since its inception in early 2008. Below is a synopsis of the Committee's activities, outreach efforts and accomplishments in 2009.

PUBLIC LISTENING FORUMS

The public listening forums provide an opportunity to present information on city services and programs to Spanish-speaking residents in a one-stop fashion. It also gives our Spanish-speaking community members an opportunity to ask questions and get answers from city departments and related agencies. Three listening forums were hosted by the Hispanic Advisory Committee during 2009.

- ◆ Saturday, June 20, 2009-Health Department

Presenters: Human Services, Health Department, Police Department, Sheriff's Office, and private immigration attorney Hugo Valverde.

Topics included residency and legal status issues, booking procedures, traffic summons, domestic violence, English classes, Medicaid, food stamps, school registration and citizenship.

Attendance: 101

- ♦ August 16, 2009-Candlewood, Oyster Point and Wellington Apartments
Attendance: 100
- ♦ Saturday, October 24, 2009-Wellington Apartments
Presenters: Newport News Police Department, Bilingual Dentist from Veterans Hospital, Transitions Family Violence Services, Health Department (WIC), and Newport News Public Schools (ESL).
Attendance: 75

INFORMATIONAL TOOLS

The Committee determined there was a need to more effectively distribute information to the Hispanic community through various resources. These resources range from electronic to paper format and aim to provide information on those issues that most impact the Hispanic community.

- ♦ **Community Connections:** The Committee compiled a contact list of local businesses, agencies, and individuals who serve the local Hispanic community. This list identifies Spanish information distribution points and potential resources for activities and events sponsored by the Committee.
- ♦ **Flyers:** The Committee developed and distributed various flyers in both English and Spanish to advertise upcoming activities and information on services, programs and events.
- ♦ **Newport News TV:** Working Group members worked in conjunction with Newport News TV (Channel 48/19) to produce a Spanish version of *Behind the Badge* television program.
- ♦ **Radio:** The Committee utilizes Selecta AM 1050 to distribute information about city programs and services, as well as emergency information, to Spanish-speaking residents. This radio station serves the Hampton Roads area.
- ♦ **Spanish Guide to Services:** The Committee identified information in the city's Citizen's Guide to Services and translated this information into a condensed version for Spanish-speaking residents. This book is available in Libraries, community centers and through various related agencies.
- ♦ **Traffic Ticket Information:** The Committee brought to light the need for a "press 2 for Spanish" option on the Newport News General District Court Traffic Division's traffic ticket phone line. Recently, the courts included this option on their hotline for recorded traffic ticket information.
- ♦ **Website:** The Committee developed a page on the city's website that houses information about the Committee including its vision, goals and activities, as well as contact and membership information.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

In order to effectively serve as a link between city government and the Hispanic community, the Committee partnered with several city departments and agencies in an effort to provide information to Spanish-speaking citizens.

- ♦ **Census 2010:** In May 2009, the U.S. Census Bureau solicited the Committee's assistance with media relations. Representatives from the Committee are part of the Complete Count Committee for Newport News and work to reach hard-to-count populations, specifically the Hispanic community.
- ♦ **Community Family Day:** In an effort to promote positive parenting practices, the Committee provided translation services and assisted with planning and advertisement for the Community Family Day event. Unfortunately, the event was cancelled due to the Nor'easter and is tentatively rescheduled for November 2010.
- ♦ **Field of Friends:** Committee representatives attended six monthly meetings and assisted with translations and public information for all three Field of Friends events. (August 7, 22 and 29, 2009)

- ♦ **Health Department-WIC:** The Health Department, WIC, requested the Committee's assistance in the hiring process of bilingual staff.
- ♦ **Healthy Families:** The Committee was instrumental in the city's decision to create a bilingual Healthy Families position.
- ♦ **Healthy Family Community Board:** On request from the Board, a representative from the Committee has attended the Board's meetings since August 2009. (The Healthy Family Community Board consists of agencies whose mission is to see that every child in Newport News has the opportunity for a safe and healthy environment.)
- ♦ **Neighbors and Nations:** While this multi-cultural event never came to fruition, Committee members worked with city staff in recruiting participants and advertising prior to its cancellation.
- ♦ **Sedgefield Helmet Drive:** (June 11, 2009) The Committee partnered with the Newport News Fire Department and Newport News Public Schools to promote bicycle safety by distributing bicycle helmets to kindergarten aged students. Helmets were obtained through a grant secured by the Fire Department. A total of 99 helmets were distributed; of those, 18 students were of Hispanic descent. The Committee also assisted with interpreter services for Open House (September 2008), Back to School Night (October 2008) and Nautical Night (May 2009). The Committee is also represented at the Sedgefield Elementary Parent Involvement Specialist meetings, which assists with parental involvement within the school.

TRAINING

The Hispanic Advisory Committee provided several opportunities for interested city staff and related agencies to learn about issues that directly impact the Hispanic community. These sessions also allowed staff to receive information on legal requirements for programs that receive federal funding. The Committee hosted several in-service training sessions during 2009.

- ♦ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Title VI; March 2009
- ♦ Committee on Youth : Three Denbigh High School graduating seniors; April 2009
- ♦ Outreach with Newport News Police: Candlewood, Oyster Point and Wellington Apartments; August 2009
- ♦ U.S. Census Bureau; May 2009
- ♦ Undocumented Employee Labor Rights; September 2009
- ♦ Newport News Public Schools: High School – ESL, Career Pathways; October 2009

Mayra Creed, Committee Chair, provided three training sessions titled "How to Effectively Communicate via an Interpreter: Cultural Overview"

- ♦ Newport News Libraries; August 25, 2009
- ♦ Health Department; September 9, 2009
- ♦ Human Services; September 18, 2009

INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

During 2008, the Committee researched best practices in developing an internship program or permanent position within the city that would serve as a direct link between the Hispanic community and city services and programs. The position, whether permanent or an internship, would provide interpreter services, translate necessary documents as needed, and perform outreach in the community to better advise residents of the services and programs available to Newport News residents.

In 2008, the development of the internship proposal was placed on hold due to fiscal constraints. However, in 2009, the Committee requested that a needs assessment be performed on city departments and related agencies to identify service delivery gaps. This assessment will be used to make recommendations to city administration on ways to improve service delivery to all residents of the city. This assessment is currently underway and will be complete by April 2010.

HUMAN SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE

Aside from public safety, the Committee identified the Department of Human Services as the agency that receives the most interaction from members of the Hispanic community. In an effort to improve service levels, the Committee created a Human Services Subcommittee consisting of representatives from the Committee and the Department of Human Services. Several improvements were made to Human Services operations as a direct result of the recommendations made by the subcommittee during 2009. The subcommittee continues to work to improve customer service levels, not just for non-English speaking clients, but for all Human Services customers.

- ◆ Implemented 'press 2 for Spanish' telephone option;
- ◆ Increased awareness and utilization of the "I Speak" cards for non-English speaking consumers;
- ◆ Increased awareness of "InterpreTalk" for immediate access to interpreters by phone;
- ◆ Assisted in the placement of the Google Translator on the City's website;
- ◆ Assisted in the hiring of a Bilingual Healthy Family Support worker;
- ◆ Assisted with the hiring of an additional bilingual eligibility worker in Human Services;
- ◆ Assisted in document translation;
- ◆ Resolved issues related to pending Medicaid cases due to language barriers;
- ◆ Continuing to review and expedite specific cases where problems have occurred;
- ◆ Developing multi-language signage in lobby;
- ◆ Making great progress in complying with Title VI; and
- ◆ Assisting in the hiring process of a Bilingual Healthy Family Assessment Worker.

VOLUNTEER TIME

All members of the Hispanic Advisory Committee are non-paid community volunteers. They receive no monetary compensation from the city for their participation on the Committee. All of the hours spent attending meetings, planning, participating in community events, activities and programs, coordinating events, corresponding with other Committee members, arranging training opportunities and presenters and providing cultural training sessions is time volunteered by each Committee member.

Last year, almost 600 hours were volunteered by the Committee.



THANK YOU!

A special thanks to the organizations and agencies that took time out of their schedules to educate the Committee on the various programs available to the residents of Newport News. With your help, we have a better understanding of how to utilize current programs to meet the needs of our limited English speaking community members.

Department of Human Services
Hampton-Newport News Community Services Board
Legal Aid Justice Center
Newport News Fire Department, Division of Emergency Management
Newport News Public Libraries
Newport News Public Schools

- ◆ Career and Technical Education
- ◆ Career Pathways
- ◆ ESL After School Program

Newport News Redevelopment and Housing Authority
Newport News Sheriff's Office
Peninsula Health Department
Peninsula READS
Project CARE
U. S. Census Bureau
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Civil Rights
U.S. Department of Labor
YWCA

Our thanks go to the following for providing much needed support to the Hispanic Committee's outreach efforts.

Busch Gardens Williamsburg	Newport News Libraries and Information Services
City Manager's Office	Newport News Parks, Recreation & Tourism
Codes Compliance Department	Newport News Public Schools
Deer Park Golf Course	Newport News Public Works
Department of Human Services	Newport News Purchasing Department, Graphics Division
Newport News Police Department	Newport News Sheriff's Office
Downing Gross Cultural Arts Center	Peninsula Health Department
Ferguson Center for the Arts	Ricardo Alegria, Selecta 1050
Fernando Himinez, Plaza Azteca	Russ Gilbeau, Bank of America
Hugo Valverde, Attorney at Law	Virginia Living Museum
Lilian Meland, Community Volunteer	Virginia War Museum
Maggie Troche, Community Volunteer	World Vision Ministry
Mariners' Museum	